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SUBJECT: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT WITH IRAQ  
  
REF: STATE 35495

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher R. Hill by reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)  
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¶1. (C) Summary: One of the key elements of PM Maliki's expected visit to Washington this summer will be the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA). The SFA defines areas of cooperation necessary to ensure a sustainable and enduring bilateral relationship with Iraq. Approved by the Iraqi parliament in November 2008 (along with the Security Agreement) and formally launched by PM Maliki and former Secretary Rice in January 2009 with the convening of the Higher Coordinating Committee (HCC), the SFA is recognized by all major political trends in Iraq as representing a vision of cooperation that will guide the bilateral relationship for the future. Active, high-level, engagement under the SFA umbrella will reassure the Government of Iraq (GOI) and Iraqi society that the U.S. will remain engaged in Iraq as our troop levels decline. PM Maliki's planned June visit to Washington, which should include a formal meeting of the SFA's Higher Coordinating Committee, will serve to both publicize and accelerate the SFA process.

¶2. (SBU) The Embassy and the GOI have undertaken a public education campaign to explain the SFA to the Iraqi people. The larger press strategy relies on officials in both Baghdad and Washington to prominently frame our cooperation on non-security issues in the SFA context. While the SFA does not include any funding commitments, we need to ensure continued ability to provide targeted technical assistance and other support to respond to priority GOI requests and advance broader USG interests. End summary.

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SFA Progress to Date  
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¶3. (SBU) The SFA was negotiated as a companion to the bilateral Security Agreement (SA). Unlike the SA, which terminates with the planned withdrawal of U.S. military forces in December 2011, the SFA has no time limitation. It is designed to guide bilateral relations with Iraq into the future. In the SFA both countries have declared their commitment to a broad and deep partnership that reflects the sort of ties the United States has with many other strategic partners. This includes robust commercial, cultural, scientific and educational links, along with active diplomatic collaboration and a strong but more traditional security partnership (post 2011). The SFA was signed (along with the SA) on November 17, 2008 by Foreign Minister (FM) Zebari and former Ambassador Crocker and ratified by the Iraqi Council of Representatives on November 27, 2008. (Note: a copy of the SFA, and relevant documents pertaining to the work discussed below, can be accessed via the State Department intranet on Embassy Baghdad's SFA SharePoint site at <http://collaborate.baghdad.state.gov/SFA>).

¶4. (SBU) All constructive Iraqi politicians see value in a long-term strategic relationship with the United States as articulated in the SFA. While the motivations are different for Sunni, Kurd and Shia politicians, all have called for more focus on the SFA vice the SA. Without catering to the political aspirations of any group or politician (such as the Kurds or Maliki in the run-up to the national elections), we should support the Iraqi wish to flesh out the SFA framework on a broad, public level, in addition to the work we are already doing to emphasize individual activities and events under the SFA umbrella.

¶5. (SBU) The SFA calls for the establishment of a Higher Coordinating Committee (HCC) to monitor overall implementation and develop agreed-upon objectives; it also envisions - but does not require - establishment of other committees along functional lines. The inaugural meeting of the HCC, chaired by Prime Minister Maliki and former Secretary Rice, took place January 12, 2009 via videoconference. Attendees on the GOI side included Deputy Prime Ministers Barham Salih and Rafi al-Essawi, National Security Advisor Mowaffak al-Rubaie, and Senior Advisor Saidq al-Rikabi. On the U.S. side, Secretary Rice was joined by Deputy National Security Advisor LTG Doug Lute, the USAID Administrator and senior officials from the Departments of Defense, Treasury and Agriculture. The principals agreed to convene future HCC meetings at a senior level every 6 months or as needed. They also agreed to identify 10 to 20 practical objectives the JCCs could address in the first 3 months of implementation.

¶6. (SBU) To execute the SFA, the GOI and USG have established  
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four Joint Coordination Committees (JCCs), which report to the HCC and are responsible for monitoring SFA implementation through regular consultations, proposing new cooperation projects and negotiating any details relating to such projects, as well as coordinating efforts among various departments and ministries. Each JCC includes a number of implementation working groups in more specific issue areas. The JCCs operate on the basis of terms of reference vetted by USG stakeholders (reftel). FM Zebari has indicated he would like to establish the diplomatic JCC, but as of now we believe normal diplomatic operations are sufficient. Bilateral security cooperation is currently being handled under Security Agreement, but in the near future we will need to consider moving non-controversial long-term security issues such as FMS sales and related training into an SFA JCC to underline (as the Iraqis also seek) the longer-term security relationship we envisage with Iraq.

¶7. (SBU) Economic and Energy Cooperation JCC: Co-chaired by DPM Barham Salih and Embassy Economic Coordinator Ambassador Marc Wall, this JCC operates through five working groups: oil and gas, trade and investment, banking and finance, industry and private sector development, and new electricity projects. The JCC has met formally twice, and all working groups are functioning. Priority projects include planning for an investment conference in the U.S., defining needs for technical assistance to support the oil sector, and encouraging new approaches to increase investment in power generation. The work in this JCC, along with the Services JCC, will feed into the bilateral Dialogue on Economic Cooperation, tentatively set for the fall.

¶8. (SBU) Services and Information Technology Cooperation JCC: Co-chaired by DPM Rafi al-Essawi and Ambassador Wall, this JCC has six working groups: transportation, agriculture, health, environment, telecommunications, and essential services. DPM Essawi has taken a very active role, convening one productive full JCC meeting and several other meetings with his team. Essawi has also been the most vocal GOI proponent of the SFA, hosting a press conference after the March 30 JCC meeting and mentioning the SFA in several

subsequent speeches and interviews; he has cast his planned mid-June visit to Washington as promoting the SFA. This JCC's working groups have had mixed success to date. Some, including agriculture and essential services, formalize pre-existing strong cooperation with the relevant ministries. Others, notably transportation, are stymied by the GOI counterparts' unwillingness to engage. We are working with Essawi to address concerns.

¶9. (SBU) Education, Culture and Science Cooperation JCC: Co-chaired by the Prime Minister and the Embassy's Minister Counselor for Public Affairs. The Prime Minister has not delegated this project to an appropriate Minister nor has he acted upon it himself. Nonetheless, working groups on Education, Culture and Science meet regularly. Current areas of focus include supporting Iraqis' study in the U.S. and linkages with U.S. institutions; opportunities to shape curriculum and provide teacher training; archaeology and cultural preservation and exchanges; and developing a national science policy and research capacity.

¶10. (SBU) Law Enforcement and Judicial Cooperation JCC: Co-chaired by Chief Justice Medhat al-Mahmoud, President of the Higher Judicial Council, and Embassy Rule of Law Coordinator Douglas Allen, the JCC has met formally three times and includes representatives of six Iraqi ministries. Qtimes and includes representatives of six Iraqi ministries. Chief Justice Medhat has strongly supported the JCC and provided effective leadership, despite his lacking direct authority over non-judicial ministries. At his invitation, the Iraqi ministries formed ministerial working groups and issued reports outlining their assistance and development needs, focused in large part on training and technical assistance. We subsequently presented an inventory of existing USG assistance programs, and Chief Justice Medhat has stressed that these programs be publicized to the Iraqi people. Our most substantive and challenging issues continue to be addressed most effectively through direct engagement with existing GOI counterparts, and the formal role of the working groups is being discussed. However, we are endeavoring to frame our key relationships within the JCC framework and to publicize Rule of Law successes with reference to the SFA.

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GOING FORWARD  
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¶11. (C) Notwithstanding some organizational issues, the SFA is off to a strong start but requires a schedule for concrete deliverables to maintain its momentum. It is broadly accepted by senior officials in both Washington and Baghdad as the roadmap for strong, productive and enduring bilateral

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ties. We need to accelerate the process and make clear to the GOI and Iraqi society that, through the SFA, the USG will sustain broad and deep engagement in Iraq that will advance the interests of both countries far into the future. Next steps include:

- Using PM Maliki's planned June visit to Washington to advance the SFA, including by highlighting the SFA in any joint statement and holding an HCC meeting. (This requires making a determination on who precisely will chair on the U.S. side and other modalities will be for this and future meetings.)
- Likewise, ensuring that DPM Essawi's planned June visit to Washington, and the proposed visit of FM Zebari, are described in public statements as advancing cooperation under the SFA.
- Arranging a high-profile investment event, similar to one the UK organized last month in London.

- Ensuring that all public statements on Iraq from all senior USG officials outside of the security realm continue to reference the SFA and our ongoing partnership. Coordinated public messages, tied to SFA themes, highlighting the impact of embassy-organized delegations, programs and assistance. (For example, the recent opening of the Qudas power plant expansion funded by the USG but built and run by the GOI touches a matter of importance to all Iraqis.)

- Continuing to bring high-level USG officials to Baghdad. Recent visits by the President, Secretary Clinton, and Speaker Pelosi, along with senior sub-cabinet officials, have helped to assuage Iraqi fears that the new administration would turn away from Iraq. As other Departments flesh out their senior staff, they should visit Iraq for meetings and public events keyed to SFA themes. In particular, a fall visit by the Secretary of Commerce, leading a trade mission, will be critical, especially given similar visits organized by other countries.

- Continued local outreach, with embassy and Provincial Reconstruction Teams explaining the SFA to the Iraqi people and officials at all levels.

- The completion and JCC approval of work plans for each working group. These plans serve as the guideposts for meetings, progress and deliverables on both a short (6 months) and long term basis.

¶12. (SBU) The SFA includes no dedicated funding, which somewhat limits the scope of exploring joint initiatives in any given sector. We must also balance and manage GOI expectations and not permit the SFA to become simply a wish list of assistance programs. We recognize that support for Iraq's still fragile transition, through capacity building and other technical assistance, remains a significant part of USG engagement in Iraq. Beyond these formal assistance programs, we need to maintain the necessary level of staffing and USG funding for short-term technical advisors, speakers, exchange programs and other efforts (albeit with Iraqi co-financing to the extent feasible) to implement the SFA and advance our goals in Iraq. Some funding requests for small projects have already been forwarded to Washington agencies for SFA deliverables. Strategically targeted and creative sources of funding, including public-private partnerships and GOI matching contributions, would provide an extra boost to the SFA's relevance.

HILL